

S E C R E T RANGOON 000838

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2013

TAGS: PREL PHUM BM

SUBJECT: ETHNIC LEADERS PLAN APPEAL TO LEADER OF JUNTA

Classified By: COM CARMEN MARTINEZ FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (S) Summary: Reverend Saboi Jum, the head of the Kachin Baptist Convention, has revealed plans by ethnic leaders to appeal directly to the head of the SPDC for a return to the path of national reconciliation. Jum asked COM if the release of Aung San Suu Kyi alone would be enough to ease US pressure on the junta. COM told Jum that the release of Aung San Suu Kyi was important, but not enough to ease USG pressure for release of all political prisoners, improved human rights for all Burmese, and credible signs of commitment to a transition to democracy. Given Jum's closeness to the SPDC's Secretary One Khin Nyunt, it was an excellent opportunity to reinforce the USG message. End Summary.

¶2. (S) Reverend Saboi Jum, the head of the Kachin Baptist Convention and one of the most respected ethnic leaders in Burma met with COM and DCM on July 9. Jum and his brother, Hkun Myat (a businessman) are both very close to the number three man in the SPDC, Secretary One, General Khin Nyunt. (Note: Jum played a vital part in negotiating the Kachin cease-fire agreement, as did Khin Nyunt. Hkun Myat also assisted in mediating cease-fire agreements with Karen, Mon and Karen insurgent groups. End Note)

¶3. (S) Jum's stated purpose at the meeting was to reveal plans by ethnic leaders to appeal directly to Senior General Than Shwe (head of the ruling SPDC junta) for a return to the path of national reconciliation. Jum said that a decision was taken by group of ethnic leaders earlier this month to draft a letter to Senior General Than Shwe appealing to him to allow renewed political activity on the part of the NLD, a release of political prisoners, and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi.

¶4. (S) Jum said the letter would be given to Than Shwe on July 19, Martyrs Day (commemorating the assassination of General Aung San - Burma's national hero and the father of Aung San Suu Kyi). Jum said he was confident the letter would actually be delivered to Than Shwe, as Jum is very close to a monk that is a personal aide to the Senior General. (Jum said he would provide COM with a copy of the letter.)

¶5. (S) Jum asked if the USG's tough position on trade sanctions and punitive measures against the regime could be softened by the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. He specifically asked, "So, if they release Aung San Suu Kyi, would that be enough for the United States?" COM told Jum that the release of ASSK was extremely important and should take place immediately, but that the USG remained committed to the resolution of the even larger problem of the SPDC's failure to live up to its stated commitment to national reconciliation. The COM told Jum that the USG would not ease up its pressure for release of all political prisoners, improved human rights for all Burmese and credible signs of commitment to a transition to democracy.

¶6. (S) Comment: We feel strongly that Jum was on a mission from not just the ethnic leaders re the planned appeal to Than Shwe, but also from Khin Nyunt. Jum seemed disappointed by COM's response to his question regarding the "softening" effect ASSK's release would have on the USG's toughening Burma policy. Given Jum's closeness to Secretary One, it was an excellent opportunity to reinforce the USG message via this channel. End Comment.

Martinez